



Appendix D: Hyphenation Help

Use this guide only when you cannot find the spelling in the dictionary or in Section 4 of this manual. Determine the usage for the compound you are contemplating — noun, adjective, verb. For nouns and adjectives, see below; for verbs and participles see Section 8 of the Gregg manual.

Contemporary style minimizes hyphen use when unnecessary and that is reflected here.

Nouns and Adjectives:

Is the compound a noun or an adjective? For example (underlines denoting compounds), in the expression *positive level shifts*, is *positive level* modifying *shifts* or is *positive* modifying *level shifts*? In this case the compound is a noun, *level shifts*, but in *level-shift outlier* the adjective *level-shift* is the hyphenated compound.

Group A: Typical

Hyphens connect many compound adjectives but not all (see Groups B-D). Hyphens are not used for compound nouns unless the noun is normally hyphenated (e.g., *by-product*, *clerk-typist*).

Noun	Adjective
<i>a gifted public orator</i>	<i>a slow-talking orator</i>
<i>a bifurcated cross section</i>	<i>cross-section diagram</i>
<i>an expensive by-product</i>	<i>a high-priced product</i>

Group B: Established Compound Nouns

In some cases, a compound adjective is an established compound noun (i.e., it stands alone as a well-known compound word). In keeping with the trend to avoid unnecessary hyphens, established compounds are not hyphenated, unless it would cause confusion.

Noun	Adjective
<i>a large high school</i>	<i>a high school diploma</i>
<i>the federal income tax</i>	<i>an income tax refund</i>
<i>the high ebb tide</i>	<i>an ebb tide sample</i>
<i>targeted mixed stocks</i>	<i>the mixed stock fishery</i>
<i>the sea ducks were</i>	<i>sea duck regulations</i>
<i>in this time series</i>	<i>the time series analysis</i>
<i>the standing crop</i>	<i>standing crop estimates</i>
<i>common property</i>	<i>a common property fishery</i>
<i>each brood year</i>	<i>brood year returns</i>
<i>the continental shelf</i>	<i>continental shelf break</i>
<i>sea ice in</i>	<i>sea ice edge</i>

A compound noun of this type is usually one that is found in the dictionary as a compound noun. However, if the compound is not in the dictionary but is a technical compound word commonly used by your audience, treat it as an established compound noun and drop the hyphen, unless it would cause confusion.

Group C: Meaning-Dependent

Some combinations can be read either way and the correct hyphen use is essential to the meaning.

Noun	Adjective
<i>a long term assignment</i> (<i>the term assignment is long</i>)	<i>a long-term assignment</i> (<i>the assignment is long term</i>)
<i>large vessel catch</i> (<i>the vessel catch was large</i>)	<i>large-vessel catch</i> (<i>catch by large vessels</i>)

This sort of problem can occur with established compound nouns as well. Although this occurs infrequently, you still must be careful.

Compound Adjective	Compound Noun
<i>high-school attendance^a</i> (attendance in high school)	<i>high school attendance^a</i> <i>high attendance at school</i>
<i>greater-scaup nesting^a</i> (nesting by greater scaup)	<i>greater scaup nesting^a</i> (greater nesting of scaup)
<i>small-game reserves^a</i> (reserves for small game)	<i>small game reserves^a</i> (small-sized game reserves)

Group D: Irrelevant

This group is composed of word combinations in which the compound could be the noun or the adjective without affecting the meaning and without certainty as to which 2 words actually form the compound. For example: in the combination *fuel flow meter*, does *fuel* modify *flow meter* or does *fuel-flow* modify *meter*? Either interpretation could be made and neither interpretation would affect the meaning. Therefore, in keeping with elimination of unnecessary hyphens, the hyphenless option is recommended. A few more examples:

<i>coded wire tag</i>	<i>salmon run failures</i>
<i>thermal mark code</i>	<i>peak noise level</i>
<i>smolt biomass production</i>	<i>run timing information</i>
<i>scale pattern analysis</i>	<i>population model predictions</i>

For word groups like these, the hyphen is unnecessary and should usually be dropped; however, the hyphen can be added if the author or editor believe it would simplify reading. Once a decision is made, that decision should carry throughout the document and, if possible, in all other documents thereafter (the notes section following Section 4 may be a convenient place to record those words). Also, before dropping the hyphen, be sure the hyphen is truly irrelevant, i.e., it does not create a different meaning. For example, ocean age determination (regarding salmon) could be interpreted as determining the ocean's age, so it is probably better to include the hyphen (ocean-age determination).

^a Although the usage format is technically necessary, the hyphenated forms look odd and the unhyphenated form probably would confuse your readers. Therefore, it would normally be better to avoid the confusion by rephrasing similar to the parenthetic explanation.

NOTES